UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ECE(52)/L.2
18 April 1997

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-second session
(Agenda item 5(a))

SUBJECT: United Nations International Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities

ACTION TO BE TAKEN: Decision

PROPOSED BY:
The Committee on Energy

The Commission decides to:

1. Endorse the decision of the Working Party on Coal (ENERGY/WP.1/12, para. 33) and that of the Committee on Energy (ECE/ENERGY/30, para. 43) taken at their sixth session held in 1996 to approve the new "United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities".

2. Request the ECE secretariat to publish, by November 1997, the UN-Framework Classification to facilitate the use of the classification framework by major coal and mineral industries worldwide.

3. Recommend to the Committee on Sustainable Energy to monitor the application of the UN-Framework Classification commencing 1997.

4. Recommend to the Economic and Social Council to consider appropriate measures for the world-wide application of the UN-Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources.

GE.97-21166

Background Note to Commission Decision on United Nations International Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities

An international framework classification for reserves /resources of solid fuels and mineral commodities was recently completed under the auspices of the Working Party on Coal. Work on the Classification started in earnest in 1994. The main purpose for developing the classification framework was to create an instrument which would permit reserves/resources to be classified on an internationally consistent and uniform basis using market economy criteria.

The classification framework will enable the incorporation of national and regional classification systems into a consistent, unified framework in order to make them compatible and comparable; help to enhance communication on a national and international level; provide for a better understanding and firmer knowledge of available reserves/resources; assist economies in transition in reassessing their solid fuels and mineral deposits according to market economy criteria; and facilitate investments, notably in transition and developing countries.

The classification framework has been endorsed by the Working Party on Coal and the Committee on Energy. In addition, the elaboration of the classification was supported by major coal and minerals producing non-ECE countries, among which were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Columbia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa and Thailand (these countries participated in the elaboration of the Classification pursuant to Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference). More than sixty ECE and non-ECE countries participated in the elaboration of the Classification.

The Classification is available in the three ECE working languages. Furthermore, arrangements are underway to have it translated into four additional languages, namely Chinese, German, Portuguese and Spanish. These translations are being undertaken by participating institutions of the countries that took part in the elaboration of the Classification.

In brief, ECE countries are being asked to endorse the Classification; request that it be published; invite the Committee on Sustainable Energy to monitor its implementation; and recommend that ECOSOC consider appropriate measures for its worldwide application. A similar resolution was adopted regarding the codification of medium and high rank coals by both the Commission and ECOSOC in 1988.

This Classification Framework is a good example of the normative functions of the Commission (i.e., the development of norms, standards, and guidelines) to promote the integration of the economies of ECE countries. In addition, it illustrates how a norm or standard developed under the auspices of the ECE can then be subsequently promulgated and adopted more globally.